

When Dogs Prick-up Their Ears

by [Kenneth Francis](#) (August 2021)



The Amsterdam Dog Market, Abraham Hondius, 1671-2

I'm thinking of buying a dog. I've been saying this to family and friends for the past four years, always procrastinating by pushing it back another year every time I mention it. It's a bit like deciding on whether or not to procreate or adopt a child, albeit less profound.

Besides humans, I regard dogs as the greatest

creatures on planet earth. But I'm also aware that owning one, despite its many rewards, can be hard work, especially for someone entering the 'autumn' of his life and hasn't been in a gym in the past 15 years.

The breed I had in mind was a Hungarian Vizsla, but I was given cautious advice that such a dog would follow me around the house and have me running along the beach twice a day, before a final night-time walkie to relieve himself. And if I did decide to buy that type of dog, I was told, for God's sake, don't call him 'Shark', especially if he goes missing on the beach and you have to call out his name while people are swimming nearby!

Decisions, decisions. I feel like the character Fagin in the musical *Oliver!* when he was contemplating marriage, while singing 'Reviewing the Situation' (I've replaced the word 'wife' with 'dog', as well as a few other lyrics):

*'...I'm reviewing the situation
Can a fellow be dogless all his life?
All the trials and tribulations!
Better settle down and get myself a pooch.
And a dog would play and walk with me,
And come for me, and go for me,
The welcome tails he'll wag at me.
The miles and miles he will walk with me.
A misery, he'll make from me...
...I think I'd better think it out again!'*

So, in reviewing the situation, I think, in the not-too-distant future, I'll settle for the lazier bull breeds. Fagin's nemesis Bill Sykes' dog, Bullseye, springs to mind: Lazy but not impartial to a reasonable walk; a creature that's not bursting with energy or endowed with the stamina of a wolf.

Speaking of wolves: According to a report in

WorldNetDaily last month (July 18), researchers from Duke University say 14,000 years of domestication plays a big part in dogs understanding humans, as opposed to wolves. In fact, man's best friend has actually evolved to understand human gestures and look to humans for help in a way that no other animals do.

The report adds that study authors, who compared wolf pups raised by humans to dogs who had barely any contact with people, discovered that dogs still outperform their wolf counterparts in tests of their understanding and co-operation with humans. The team behind the research adds their results show dogs instinctively understand people.

I remember growing up as a young boy, our dogs would often yawn in near unison with family members a split second after they yawned. This phenomenon is called 'contagious yawning', and can be seen when one person yawns and it triggers others nearby to do likewise.

"It's reasonable to assume that dogs who yawn when their owners do are more emotionally connected to them," says Dr Brian Hare, author of the book *The Genius of Dogs* and founder of the [@NERIconoclast](#)